

CHAPTER II

Tell us, ye Dead, will none of you in pity
To those you left behind disclose the secret?
O! That some courteous Ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard that Souls departed have sometimes
Fore-warned Men of their deaths:
'Twas kindly done
To knock, and give the alarum.

Blair.

Ambrosio shuddered at himself, when He reflected on his rapid advances in iniquity. The enormous crime which He had just committed filled him with real horror. The murdered Elvira was continually before his eyes, and his guilt was already punished by the agonies of his conscience. Time, however, considerably weakened these impressions: One day passed away, another followed it, and still not the least suspicion was thrown upon him. Impunity reconciled him to his guilt: He began to resume his spirits; and as his fears of detection died away, He paid

less attention to the reproaches of remorse. Matilda exerted herself to quiet his alarms. At the first intelligence of Elvira's death, She seemed greatly affected, and joined the Monk in deploring the unhappy catastrophe of his adventure: But when She found his agitation to be somewhat calmed, and himself better disposed to listen to her arguments, She proceeded to mention his offence in milder terms, and convince him that He was not so highly culpable as He appeared to consider himself. She represented that He had only availed himself of the rights which Nature allows to every one, those of self-preservation: That either Elvira or himself must have perished, and that her inflexibility and resolution to ruin him had deservedly marked her out for the Victim. She next stated, that as He had before rendered himself suspected to Elvira, it was a fortunate event for him that her lips were closed by death; since without this last adventure, her suspicions if made public might have produced very disagreeable consequences. He had therefore freed himself from an Enemy, to whom the errors of his conduct were sufficiently known to make her dangerous, and who was the greatest obstacle to his designs upon Antonia. Those designs She encouraged him not to abandon. She assured him that, no longer protected by her Mother's watchful eye, the Daughter would fall an easy conquest; and by praising and enumerating Antonia's

charms, She strove to rekindle the desires of the Monk. In this endeavour She succeeded but too well.

As if the crimes into which his passion had seduced him had only increased its violence, He longed more eagerly than ever to enjoy Antonia. The same success in concealing his present guilt, He trusted would attend his future. He was deaf to the murmurs of conscience, and resolved to satisfy his desires at any price. He waited only for an opportunity of repeating his former enterprize; But to procure that opportunity by the same means was now impracticable. In the first transports of despair He had dashed the enchanted Myrtle into a thousand pieces: Matilda told him plainly that He must expect no further assistance from the infernal Powers unless He was willing to subscribe to their established conditions. This Ambrosio was determined not to do: He persuaded himself that however great might be his iniquity, so long as he preserved his claim to salvation, He need not despair of pardon. He therefore resolutely refused to enter into any bond or compact with the Fiends; and Matilda finding him obstinate upon this point, forbore to press him further. She exerted her invention to discover some means of putting Antonia into the Abbot's power: Nor was it long before that means presented itself.

While her ruin was thus meditating, the unhappy Girl herself suffered severely from the loss of her Mother. Every morning on waking, it was her first care to hasten to Elvira's chamber. On that which followed Ambrosio's fatal visit, She woke later than was her usual custom: Of this She was convinced by the Abbey Chimes. She started from her bed, threw on a few loose garments hastily, and was speeding to enquire how her Mother had passed the night, when her foot struck against something which lay in her passage. She looked down. What was her horror at recognizing Elvira's livid Corse! She uttered a loud shriek, and threw herself upon the floor. She clasped the inanimate form to her bosom, felt that it was dead-cold, and with a movement of disgust, of which She was not the Mistress, let it fall again from her arms. The cry had alarmed Flora, who hastened to her assistance. The sight which She beheld penetrated her with horror; but her alarm was more audible than Antonia's. She made the House ring with her lamentations, while her Mistress, almost suffocated with grief, could only mark her distress by sobs and groans. Flora's shrieks soon reached the ears of the Hostess, whose terror and surprize were excessive on learning the cause of this disturbance. A Physician was immediately sent for: But on the first moment of beholding the Corse, He declared that

Elvira's recovery was beyond the power of art. He proceeded therefore to give his assistance to Antonia, who by this time was truly in need of it. She was conveyed to bed, while the Landlady busied herself in giving orders for Elvira's Burial. Dame Jacintha was a plain good kind of Woman, charitable, generous, and devout: But her intellects were weak, and She was a Miserable Slave to fear and superstition. She shuddered at the idea of passing the night in the same House with a dead Body: She was persuaded that Elvira's Ghost would appear to her, and no less certain that such a visit would kill her with fright. From this persuasion, She resolved to pass the night at a Neighbour's, and insisted that the Funeral should take place the next day. St. Clare's Cemetery being the nearest, it was determined that Elvira should be buried there. Dame Jacintha engaged to defray every expence attending the burial. She knew not in what circumstances Antonia was left, but from the sparing manner in which the Family had lived, She concluded them to be indifferent. Consequently, She entertained very little hope of ever being recompensed; But this consideration prevented her not from taking care that the Interment was performed with decency, and from showing the unfortunate Antonia all possible respect.

Nobody dies of mere grief; Of this Antonia was an instance.

Aided by her youth and healthy constitution, She shook off the malady which her Mother's death had occasioned; But it was not so easy to remove the disease of her mind. Her eyes were constantly filled with tears: Every trifle affected her, and She evidently nourished in her bosom a profound and rooted melancholy. The slightest mention of Elvira, the most trivial circumstance recalling that beloved Parent to her memory, was sufficient to throw her into serious agitation. How much would her grief have been increased, had She known the agonies which terminated her Mother's existence! But of this no one entertained the least suspicion. Elvira was subject to strong convulsions: It was supposed that, aware of their approach, She had dragged herself to her Daughter's chamber in hopes of assistance; that a sudden access of her fits had seized her, too violent to be resisted by her already enfeebled state of health; and that She had expired ere She had time to reach the medicine which generally relieved her, and which stood upon a shelf in Antonia's room. This idea was firmly credited by the few people, who interested themselves about Elvira: Her Death was esteemed a natural event, and soon forgotten by all save by her, who had but too much reason to deplore her loss.

In truth Antonia's situation was sufficiently embarrassing and unpleasant. She was alone in the midst of a dissipated and expensive City; She was ill provided with money, and worse with Friends. Her aunt Leonella was still at Cordova, and She knew not her direction. Of the Marquis de las Cisternas She heard no news: As to Lorenzo, She had long given up the idea of possessing any interest in his bosom. She knew not to whom She could address herself in her present dilemma. She wished to consult Ambrosio; But She remembered her Mother's injunctions to shun him as much as possible, and the last conversation which Elvira had held with her upon the subject had given her sufficient lights respecting his designs to put her upon her guard against him in future. Still all her Mother's warnings could not make her change her good opinion of the Friar. She continued to feel that his friendship and society were requisite to her happiness: She looked upon his failings with a partial eye, and could not persuade herself that He really had intended her ruin. However, Elvira had positively commanded her to drop his acquaintance, and She had too much respect for her orders to disobey them.

At length She resolved to address herself for advice and protection to the Marquis de las Cisternas, as being her nearest

Relation. She wrote to him, briefly stating her desolate situation; She besought him to compassionate his Brother's Child, to continue to her Elvira's pension, and to authorise her retiring to his old Castle in Murcia, which till now had been her retreat. Having sealed her letter, She gave it to the trusty Flora, who immediately set out to execute her commission. But Antonia was born under an unlucky Star. Had She made her application to the Marquis but one day sooner, received as his Niece and placed at the head of his Family, She would have escaped all the misfortunes with which She was now threatened. Raymond had always intended to execute this plan: But first, his hopes of making the proposal to Elvira through the lips of Agnes, and afterwards, his disappointment at losing his intended Bride, as well as the severe illness which for some time had confined him to his Bed, made him defer from day to day the giving an Asylum in his House to his Brother's Widow. He had commissioned Lorenzo to supply her liberally with money: But Elvira, unwilling to receive obligations from that Nobleman, had assured him that She needed no immediate pecuniary assistance. Consequently, the Marquis did not imagine that a trifling delay on his part could create any embarrassment; and the distress and agitation of his mind might well excuse his negligence.

Had He been informed that Elvira's death had left her Daughter Friendless and unprotected, He would doubtless have taken such measures, as would have ensured her from every danger: But Antonia was not destined to be so fortunate. The day on which She sent her letter to the Palace de las Cisternas was that following Lorenzo's departure from Madrid. The Marquis was in the first paroxysms of despair at the conviction that Agnes was indeed no more: He was delirious, and his life being in danger, no one was suffered to approach him. Flora was informed that He was incapable of attending to Letters, and that probably a few hours would decide his fate. With this unsatisfactory answer She was obliged to return to her Mistress, who now found herself plunged into greater difficulties than ever.

Flora and Dame Jacintha exerted themselves to console her. The Latter begged her to make herself easy, for that as long as She chose to stay with her, She would treat her like her own Child. Antonia, finding that the good Woman had taken a real affection for her, was somewhat comforted by thinking that She had at least one Friend in the World. A Letter was now brought to her, directed to Elvira. She recognized Leonella's writing, and opening it with joy, found a detailed account of her Aunt's adventures at Cordova. She informed her Sister that She had

recovered her Legacy, had lost her heart, and had received in exchange that of the most amiable of Apothecaries, past, present, and to come. She added that She should be at Madrid on the Tuesday night, and meant to have the pleasure of presenting her Caro Sposo in form. Though her nuptials were far from pleasing Antonia, Leonella's speedy return gave her Niece much delight. She rejoiced in thinking that She should once more be under a Relation's care. She could not but judge it to be highly improper, for a young Woman to be living among absolute Strangers, with no one to regulate her conduct, or protect her from the insults to which, in her defenceless situation, She was exposed. She therefore looked forward with impatience to the Tuesday night.

It arrived. Antonia listened anxiously to the Carriages, as they rolled along the Street. None of them stopped, and it grew late without Leonella's appearing. Still, Antonia resolved to sit up till her Aunt's arrival, and in spite of all her remonstrances, Dame Jacintha and Flora insisted upon doing the same. The hours passed on slow and tediously. Lorenzo's departure from Madrid had put a stop to the nightly Serenades: She hoped in vain to hear the usual sound of Guitars beneath her window. She took up her own, and struck a few chords: But Music that evening had lost

its charms for her, and She soon replaced the Instrument in its case. She seated herself at her embroidery frame, but nothing went right: The silks were missing, the thread snapped every moment, and the needles were so expert at falling that they seemed to be animated. At length a flake of wax fell from the Taper which stood near her upon a favourite wreath of Violets: This completely discomposed her; She threw down her needle, and quitted the frame. It was decreed that for that night nothing should have the power of amusing her. She was the prey of Ennui, and employed herself in making fruitless wishes for the arrival of her Aunt.

As She walked with a listless air up and down the chamber, the Door caught her eye conducting to that which had been her Mother's. She remembered that Elvira's little Library was arranged there, and thought that She might possibly find in it some Book to amuse her till Leonella should arrive. Accordingly She took her Taper from the table, passed through the little Closet, and entered the adjoining apartment. As She looked around her, the sight of this room brought to her recollection a thousand painful ideas. It was the first time of her entering it since her Mother's death. The total silence prevailing through the chamber, the Bed despoiled of its furniture, the cheerless

hearth where stood an extinguished Lamp, and a few dying Plants in the window which, since Elvira's loss, had been neglected, inspired Antonia with a melancholy awe. The gloom of night gave strength to this sensation. She placed her light upon the Table, and sank into a large chair, in which She had seen her Mother seated a thousand and a thousand times. She was never to see her seated there again! Tears unbidden streamed down her cheek, and She abandoned herself to the sadness which grew deeper with every moment.

Ashamed of her weakness, She at length rose from her seat: She proceeded to seek for what had brought her to this melancholy scene. The small collection of Books was arranged upon several shelves in order. Antonia examined them without finding any thing likely to interest her, till She put her hand upon a volume of old Spanish Ballads. She read a few Stanzas of one of them: They excited her curiosity. She took down the Book, and seated herself to peruse it with more ease. She trimmed the Taper, which now drew towards its end, and then read the following Ballad.

ALONZO THE BRAVE, AND FAIR IMOGINE

A Warrior so bold, and a Virgin so bright
Conversed, as They sat on the green:
They gazed on each other with tender delight;
Alonzo the Brave was the name of the Knight,
The Maid's was the Fair Imogine.

'And Oh!' said the Youth, 'since to-morrow I go
To fight in a far distant land,
Your tears for my absence soon leaving to flow,
Some Other will court you, and you will bestow
On a wealthier Suitor your hand.'

'Oh! hush these suspicions,' Fair Imogine said,
'Offensive to Love and to me!
For if ye be living, or if ye be dead,
I swear by the Virgin, that none in your stead
Shall Husband of Imogine be.

'If e'er I by lust or by wealth led aside
Forget my Alonzo the Brave,
God grant, that to punish my falsehood and pride
Your Ghost at the Marriage may sit by my side,
May tax me with perjury, claim me as Bride,

And bear me away to the Grave!

To Palestine hastened the Hero so bold;

His Love, She lamented him sore:

But scarce had a twelve-month elapsed, when behold,

A Baron all covered with jewels and gold

Arrived at Fair Imogine's door.

His treasure, his presents, his spacious domain

Soon made her untrue to her vows:

He dazzled her eyes; He bewildered her brain;

He caught her affections so light and so vain,

And carried her home as his Spouse.

And now had the Marriage been blest by the Priest;

The revelry now was begun:

The Tables, they groaned with the weight of the Feast;

Nor yet had the laughter and merriment ceased,

When the Bell of the Castle told,--'One!'

Then first with amazement Fair Imogine found

That a Stranger was placed by her side: His air was terrific;

He uttered no sound; He spoke not, He moved not,

He looked not around,
But earnestly gazed on the Bride.

His vizor was closed, and gigantic his height;
His armour was sable to view:
All pleasure and laughter were hushed at his sight;
The Dogs as They eyed him drew back in affright,
The Lights in the chamber burned blue!

His presence all bosoms appeared to dismay;
The Guests sat in silence and fear.
At length spoke the Bride, while She trembled;
'I pray, Sir Knight, that your Helmet aside you would lay,
And deign to partake of our cheer.'

The Lady is silent: The Stranger complies.
His vizor lie slowly unclosed:
Oh! God! what a sight met Fair Imogine's eyes!
What words can express her dismay and surprize,
When a Skeleton's head was exposed.

All present then uttered a terrified shout;
All turned with disgust from the scene.

The worms, They crept in, and the worms, They crept out,
And sported his eyes and his temples about,
While the Spectre addressed Imogine.

'Behold me, Thou false one! Behold me!' He cried;
'Remember Alonzo the Brave!
God grants, that to punish thy falsehood and pride
My Ghost at thy marriage should sit by thy side,
Should tax thee with perjury, claim thee as Bride
And bear thee away to the Grave!'

Thus saying, his arms round the Lady He wound,
While loudly She shrieked in dismay;
Then sank with his prey through the wide-yawning ground:
Nor ever again was Fair Imogine found,
Or the Spectre who bore her away.

Not long lived the Baron; and none since that time
To inhabit the Castle presume:
For Chronicles tell, that by order sublime
There Imogine suffers the pain of her crime,
And mourns her deplorable doom.

At midnight four times in each year does her Spright
When Mortals in slumber are bound,
Arrayed in her bridal apparel of white,
Appear in the Hall with the Skeleton-Knight,
And shriek, as He whirls her around.

While They drink out of skulls newly torn from the grave,
Dancing round them the Spectres are seen:
Their liquor is blood, and this horrible Stave
They howl.--'To the health of Alonzo the Brave,
And his Consort, the False Imogine!'

The perusal of this story was ill-calculated to dispel Antonia's melancholy. She had naturally a strong inclination to the marvellous; and her Nurse, who believed firmly in Apparitions, had related to her when an Infant so many horrible adventures of this kind, that all Elvira's attempts had failed to eradicate their impressions from her Daughter's mind. Antonia still nourished a superstitious prejudice in her bosom: She was often susceptible of terrors which, when She discovered their natural and insignificant cause, made her blush at her own weakness. With such a turn of mind, the adventure which She had just been reading sufficed to give her apprehensions the alarm. The hour

and the scene combined to authorize them. It was the dead of night: She was alone, and in the chamber once occupied by her deceased Mother. The weather was comfortless and stormy: The wind howled around the House, the doors rattled in their frames, and the heavy rain pattered against the windows. No other sound was heard. The Taper, now burnt down to the socket, sometimes flaring upwards shot a gleam of light through the room, then sinking again seemed upon the point of expiring. Antonia's heart throbbed with agitation: Her eyes wandered fearfully over the objects around her, as the trembling flame illuminated them at intervals. She attempted to rise from her seat; But her limbs trembled so violently that She was unable to proceed. She then called Flora, who was in a room at no great distance: But agitation choaked her voice, and her cries died away in hollow murmurs.

She passed some minutes in this situation, after which her terrors began to diminish. She strove to recover herself, and acquire strength enough to quit the room: Suddenly She fancied, that She heard a low sigh drawn near her. This idea brought back her former weakness. She had already raised herself from her seat, and was on the point of taking the Lamp from the Table. The imaginary noise stopped her: She drew back her hand, and

supported herself upon the back of a Chair. She listened anxiously, but nothing more was heard.

'Gracious God!' She said to herself; 'What could be that sound? Was I deceived, or did I really hear it?'

Her reflections were interrupted by a noise at the door scarcely audible: It seemed as if somebody was whispering. Antonia's alarm increased: Yet the Bolt She knew to be fastened, and this idea in some degree reassured her. Presently the Latch was lifted up softly, and the Door moved with caution backwards and forwards. Excess of terror now supplied Antonia with that strength, of which She had till then been deprived. She started from her place and made towards the Closet door, whence She might soon have reached the chamber where She expected to find Flora and Dame Jacintha. Scarcely had She reached the middle of the room when the Latch was lifted up a second time. An involuntary movement obliged her to turn her head. Slowly and gradually the Door turned upon its hinges, and standing upon the Threshold She beheld a tall thin Figure, wrapped in a white shroud which covered it from head to foot.

This vision arrested her feet: She remained as if petrified in

the middle of the apartment. The Stranger with measured and solemn steps drew near the Table. The dying Taper darted a blue and melancholy flame as the Figure advanced towards it. Over the Table was fixed a small Clock; The hand of it was upon the stroke of three. The Figure stopped opposite to the Clock: It raised its right arm, and pointed to the hour, at the same time looking earnestly upon Antonia, who waited for the conclusion of this scene, motionless and silent.

The figure remained in this posture for some moments. The clock struck. When the sound had ceased, the Stranger advanced yet a few steps nearer Antonia.

'Yet three days,' said a voice faint, hollow, and sepulchral;

'Yet three days, and we meet again!'

Antonia shuddered at the words.

'We meet again?' She pronounced at length with difficulty:

'Where shall we meet? Whom shall I meet?'

The figure pointed to the ground with one hand, and with the other raised the Linen which covered its face.

'Almighty God! My Mother!'

Antonia shrieked, and fell lifeless upon the floor.

Dame Jacintha who was at work in a neighbouring chamber, was alarmed by the cry: Flora was just gone down stairs to fetch fresh oil for the Lamp, by which they had been sitting. Jacintha therefore hastened alone to Antonia's assistance, and great was her amazement to find her extended upon the floor. She raised her in her arms, conveyed her to her apartment, and placed her upon the Bed still senseless. She then proceeded to bathe her temples, chafe her hands, and use all possible means of bringing her to herself. With some difficulty She succeeded. Antonia opened her eyes, and looked round her wildly.

'Where is She?' She cried in a trembling voice; 'Is She gone? Am I safe? Speak to me! Comfort me! Oh! speak to me for God's sake!'

'Safe from whom, my Child?' replied the astonished Jacintha;

'What alarms you? Of whom are you afraid?'

'In three days! She told me that we should meet in three days! I heard her say it! I saw her, Jacintha, I saw her but this moment!'

She threw herself upon Jacintha's bosom.

'You saw her? Saw whom?'

'My Mother's Ghost!'

'Christ Jesus!' cried Jacintha, and starting from the Bed, let fall Antonia upon the pillow, and fled in consternation out of the room.

As She hastened down stairs, She met Flora ascending them.

'Go to your Mistress, Flora,' said She; 'Here are rare doings!

Oh! I am the most unfortunate Woman alive! My House is filled with Ghosts and dead Bodies, and the Lord knows what besides; Yet I am sure, nobody likes such company less than I do. But go your way to Donna Antonia, Flora, and let me go mine.'

Thus saying, She continued her course to the Street door, which

She opened, and without allowing herself time to throw on her veil, She made the best of her way to the Capuchin Abbey. In the meanwhile, Flora hastened to her Lady's chamber, equally surprized and alarmed at Jacintha's consternation. She found Antonia lying upon the bed insensible. She used the same means for her recovery that Jacintha had already employed; But finding that her Mistress only recovered from one fit to fall into another, She sent in all haste for a Physician. While expecting his arrival, She undrest Antonia, and conveyed her to Bed.

Heedless of the storm, terrified almost out of her senses, Jacintha ran through the Streets, and stopped not till She reached the Gate of the Abbey. She rang loudly at the bell, and as soon as the Porter appeared, She desired permission to speak to the Superior. Ambrosio was then conferring with Matilda upon the means of procuring access to Antonia. The cause of Elvira's death remaining unknown, He was convinced that crimes were not so swiftly followed by punishment, as his Instructors the Monks had taught him, and as till then He had himself believed. This persuasion made him resolve upon Antonia's ruin, for the enjoyment of whose person dangers and difficulties only seemed to have increased his passion. The Monk had already made one attempt to gain admission to her presence; But Flora had refused

him in such a manner as to convince him that all future endeavours must be vain. Elvira had confided her suspicions to that trusty Servant: She had desired her never to leave Ambrosio alone with her Daughter, and if possible to prevent their meeting altogether. Flora promised to obey her, and had executed her orders to the very letter. Ambrosio's visit had been rejected that morning, though Antonia was ignorant of it. He saw that to obtain a sight of his Mistress by open means was out of the question; and both Himself and Matilda had consumed the night, in endeavouring to invent some plan, whose event might be more successful. Such was their employment, when a Lay-Brother entered the Abbot's Cell, and informed him that a Woman calling herself Jacintha Zuniga requested audience for a few minutes.

Ambrosio was by no means disposed to grant the petition of his Visitor. He refused it positively, and bad the Lay-Brother tell the Stranger to return the next day. Matilda interrupted him.

'See this Woman,' said She in a low voice; 'I have my reasons.'

The Abbot obeyed her, and signified that He would go to the Parlour immediately. With this answer the Lay-Brother withdrew. As soon as they were alone Ambrosio enquired why

Matilda wished him to see this Jacintha.

'She is Antonia's Hostess,' replied Matilda; 'She may possibly be of use to you: but let us examine her, and learn what brings her hither.'

They proceeded together to the Parlour, where Jacintha was already waiting for the Abbot. She had conceived a great opinion of his piety and virtue; and supposing him to have much influence over the Devil, thought that it must be an easy matter for him to lay Elvira's Ghost in the Red Sea. Filled with this persuasion She had hastened to the Abbey. As soon as She saw the Monk enter the Parlour, She dropped upon her knees, and began her story as follows.

'Oh! Reverend Father! Such an accident! Such an adventure! I know not what course to take, and unless you can help me, I shall certainly go distracted. Well, to be sure, never was Woman so unfortunate, as myself! All in my power to keep clear of such abomination have I done, and yet that all is too little. What signifies my telling my beads four times a day, and observing every fast prescribed by the Calendar? What signifies my having made three Pilgrimages to St. James of Compostella, and purchased

as many pardons from the Pope as would buy off Cain's punishment? Nothing prospers with me! All goes wrong, and God only knows, whether any thing will ever go right again! Why now, be your Holiness the Judge. My Lodger dies in convulsions; Out of pure kindness I bury her at my own expence; (Not that She is any Relation of mine, or that I shall be benefited a single pistole by her death: I got nothing by it, and therefore you know, reverend Father, that her living or dying was just the same to me. But that is nothing to the purpose; To return to what I was saying,) I took care of her funeral, had every thing performed decently and properly, and put myself to expence enough, God knows! And how do you think the Lady repays me for my kindness? Why truly by refusing to sleep quietly in her comfortable deal Coffin, as a peaceable well-disposed Spirit ought to do, and coming to plague me, who never wish to set eyes on her again. Forsooth, it well becomes her to go racketing about my House at midnight, popping into her Daughter's room through the Keyhole, and frightening the poor Child out of her wits! Though She be a Ghost, She might be more civil than to bolt into a Person's House, who likes her company so little. But as for me, reverend Father, the plain state of the case is this: If She walks into my House, I must walk out of it, for I cannot abide such Visitors, not I! Thus you see, your Sanctity, that

without your assistance I am ruined and undone for ever. I shall be obliged to quit my House; Nobody will take it, when 'tis known that She haunts it, and then I shall find myself in a fine situation! Miserable Woman that I am! What shall I do! What will become of me!

Here She wept bitterly, wrung her hands, and begged to know the Abbot's opinion of her case.

'In truth, good Woman,' replied He, 'It will be difficult for me to relieve you without knowing what is the matter with you. You have forgotten to tell me what has happened, and what it is you want.'

'Let me die' cried Jacintha, 'but your Sanctity is in the right! This then is the fact stated briefly. A lodger of mine is lately dead, a very good sort of Woman that I must needs say for her as far as my knowledge of her went, though that was not a great way:

She kept me too much at a distance; for indeed She was given to be upon the high ropes, and whenever I ventured to speak to her, She had a look with her which always made me feel a little queerish, God forgive me for saying so. However, though She was

more stately than needful, and affected to look down upon me
(Though if I am well informed, I come of as good Parents as She
could do for her ears, for her Father was a Shoe-maker at
Cordova, and Mine was an Hatter at Madrid, aye, and a very
creditable Hatter too, let me tell you,) Yet for all her pride,
She was a quiet well-behaved Body, and I never wish to have a
better Lodger. This makes me wonder the more at her not sleeping
quietly in her Grave: But there is no trusting to people in this
world! For my part, I never saw her do amiss, except on the
Friday before her death. To be sure, I was then much scandalized
by seeing her eat the wing of a Chicken! "How, Madona Flora!"
quoth I; (Flora, may it please your Reverence, is the name of the
waiting Maid)--"How, Madona Flora!" quoth I; "Does your
Mistress eat flesh upon Fridays? Well! Well! See the event,
and then remember that Dame Jacintha warned you of it!" These
were my very words, but Alas! I might as well have held my
tongue! Nobody minded me; and Flora, who is somewhat pert and
snappish, (More is the pity, say I) told me that there was no
more harm in eating a Chicken than the egg from which it came.
Nay, She even declared that if her Lady added a slice of bacon,
She would not be an inch nearer Damnation, God protect us! A
poor ignorant sinful soul! I protest to your Holiness, I
trembled to hear her utter such blasphemies, and expected every

moment to see the ground open and swallow her up, Chicken and all! For you must know, worshipful Father, that while She talked thus, She held the plate in her hand, on which lay the identical roast Fowl. And a fine Bird it was, that I must say for it! Done to a turn, for I superintended the cooking of it myself: It was a little Gallician of my own raising, may it please your Holiness, and the flesh was as white as an egg-shell, as indeed Donna Elvira told me herself. "Dame Jacintha," said She, very good-humouredly, though to say the truth, She was always very polite to me'

Here Ambrosio's patience failed him. Eager to know Jacintha's business in which Antonia seemed to be concerned, He was almost distracted while listening to the rambling of this prosing old Woman. He interrupted her, and protested that if She did not immediately tell her story and have done with it, He should quit the Parlour, and leave her to get out of her difficulties by herself. This threat had the desired effect. Jacintha related her business in as few words as She could manage; But her account was still so prolix that Ambrosio had need of his patience to bear him to the conclusion.

'And so, your Reverence,' said She, after relating Elvira's death

and burial, with all their circumstances; 'And so, your Reverence, upon hearing the shriek, I put away my work, and away posted I to Donna Antonia's chamber. Finding nobody there, I past on to the next; But I must own, I was a little timorous at going in, for this was the very room where Donna Elvira used to sleep. However, in I went, and sure enough, there lay the young Lady at full length upon the floor, as cold as a stone, and as white as a sheet. I was surprized at this, as your Holiness may well suppose; But Oh me! how I shook when I saw a great tall figure at my elbow whose head touched the ceiling! The face was Donna Elvira's, I must confess; But out of its mouth came clouds of fire, its arms were loaded with heavy chains which it rattled piteously, and every hair on its head was a Serpent as big as my arm! At this I was frightened enough, and began to say my Ave-Maria: But the Ghost interrupting me uttered three loud groans, and roared out in a terrible voice, "Oh! That Chicken's wing! My poor soul suffers for it!" As soon as She had said this, the Ground opened, the Spectre sank down, I heard a clap of thunder, and the room was filled with a smell of brimstone. When I recovered from my fright, and had brought Donna Antonia to herself, who told me that She had cried out upon seeing her Mother's Ghost, (And well might She cry, poor Soul! Had I been in her place, I should have cried ten times louder) it directly

came into my head, that if any one had power to quiet this Spectre, it must be your Reverence. So hither I came in all diligence, to beg that you will sprinkle my House with holy water, and lay the Apparition in the Red Sea.'

Ambrosio stared at this strange story, which He could not credit.

'Did Donna Antonia also see the Ghost?' said He.

'As plain as I see you, Reverend Father!'

Ambrosio paused for a moment. Here was an opportunity offered him of gaining access to Antonia, but He hesitated to employ it. The reputation which He enjoyed in Madrid was still dear to him; and since He had lost the reality of virtue, it appeared as if its semblance was become more valuable. He was conscious that publicly to break through the rule never to quit the Abbey precincts, would derogate much from his supposed austerity. In visiting Elvira, He had always taken care to keep his features concealed from the Domestics. Except by the Lady, her Daughter, and the faithful Flora, He was known in the Family by no other name than that of Father Jerome. Should He comply with Jacintha's request, and accompany her to her House, He knew that

the violation of his rule could not be kept a secret. However, his eagerness to see Antonia obtained the victory: He even hoped, that the singularity of this adventure would justify him in the eyes of Madrid: But whatever might be the consequences, He resolved to profit by the opportunity which chance had presented to him. An expressive look from Matilda confirmed him in this resolution.

'Good Woman,' said He to Jacintha, 'what you tell me is so extraordinary that I can scarcely credit your assertions.

However, I will comply with your request. Tomorrow after Matins you may expect me at your House: I will then examine into what I can do for you, and if it is in my power, will free you from this unwelcome Visitor. Now then go home, and peace be with you!'

'Home?' exclaimed Jacintha; 'I go home? Not I by my troth! except under your protection, I set no foot of mine within the threshold. God help me, the Ghost may meet me upon the Stairs, and whisk me away with her to the devil! Oh! That I had accepted young Melchior Basco's offer! Then I should have had somebody to protect me; But now I am a lone Woman, and meet with nothing but crosses and misfortunes! Thank Heaven, it is not yet too late to repent! There is Simon Gonzalez will have me any day

of the week, and if I live till daybreak, I will marry him out of hand: An Husband I will have, that is determined, for now this Ghost is once in my House, I shall be frightened out of my wits to sleep alone. But for God's sake, reverend Father, come with me now. I shall have no rest till the House is purified, or the poor young Lady either. The dear Girl! She is in a piteous taking: I left her in strong convulsions, and I doubt, She will not easily recover her fright.'

The Friar started, and interrupted her hastily.

'In convulsions, say you? Antonia in convulsions? Lead on, good Woman! I follow you this moment!'

Jacintha insisted upon his stopping to furnish himself with the vessel of holy water: With this request He complied. Thinking herself safe under his protection should a Legion of Ghosts attack her, the old Woman returned the Monk a profusion of thanks, and they departed together for the Strada di San Iago.

So strong an impression had the Spectre made upon Antonia, that for the first two or three hours the Physician declared her life to be in danger. The fits at length becoming less frequent

induced him to alter his opinion. He said that to keep her quiet was all that was necessary; and He ordered a medicine to be prepared which would tranquillize her nerves, and procure her that repose which at present She much wanted. The sight of Ambrosio, who now appeared with Jacintha at her Bedside, contributed essentially to compose her ruffled spirits. Elvira had not sufficiently explained herself upon the nature of his designs, to make a Girl so ignorant of the world as her Daughter aware how dangerous was his acquaintance. At this moment, when penetrated with horror at the scene which had just past, and dreading to contemplate the Ghost's prediction, her mind had need of all the succours of friendship and religion, Antonia regarded the Abbot with an eye doubly partial. That strong prepossession in his favour still existed which She had felt for him at first sight: She fancied, yet knew not wherefore, that his presence was a safeguard to her from every danger, insult, or misfortune.

She thanked him gratefully for his visit, and related to him the adventure, which had alarmed her so seriously.

The Abbot strove to reassure her, and convince her that the whole had been a deception of her overheated fancy. The solitude in which She had passed the Evening, the gloom of night,

the Book which She had been reading, and the Room in which She sat, were all calculated to place before her such a vision. He treated the idea of Ghosts with ridicule, and produced strong arguments to prove the fallacy of such a system. His conversation tranquillized and comforted her, but did not convince her. She could not believe that the Spectre had been a mere creature of her imagination; Every circumstance was impressed upon her mind too forcibly, to permit her flattering herself with such an idea. She persisted in asserting that She had really seen her Mother's Ghost, had heard the period of her dissolution announced and declared that She never should quit her bed alive. Ambrosio advised her against encouraging these sentiments, and then quitted her chamber, having promised to repeat his visit on the morrow. Antonia received this assurance with every mark of joy: But the Monk easily perceived that He was not equally acceptable to her Attendant. Flora obeyed Elvira's injunctions with the most scrupulous observance. She examined every circumstance with an anxious eye likely in the least to prejudice her young Mistress, to whom She had been attached for many years. She was a Native of Cuba, had followed Elvira to Spain, and loved the young Antonia with a Mother's affection. Flora quitted not the room for a moment while the Abbot remained there: She watched his every word, his every

look, his every action. He saw that her suspicious eye was always fixed upon him, and conscious that his designs would not bear inspection so minute, He felt frequently confused and disconcerted. He was aware that She doubted the purity of his intentions; that She would never leave him alone with Antonia, and his Mistress defended by the presence of this vigilant Observer, He despaired of finding the means to gratify his passion.

As He quitted the House, Jacintha met him, and begged that some Masses might be sung for the repose of Elvira's soul, which She doubted not was suffering in Purgatory. He promised not to forget her request; But He perfectly gained the old Woman's heart by engaging to watch during the whole of the approaching night in the haunted chamber. Jacintha could find no terms sufficiently strong to express her gratitude, and the Monk departed loaded with her benedictions.

It was broad day when He returned to the Abbey. His first care was to communicate what had past to his Confident. He felt too sincere a passion for Antonia to have heard unmoved the prediction of her speedy death, and He shuddered at the idea of losing an object so dear to him. Upon this head Matilda

reassured him. She confirmed the arguments which Himself had already used: She declared Antonia to have been deceived by the wandering of her brain, by the Spleen which opprest her at the moment, and by the natural turn of her mind to superstition, and the marvellous. As to Jacintha's account, the absurdity refuted itself; The Abbot hesitated not to believe that She had fabricated the whole story, either confused by terror, or hoping to make him comply more readily with her request. Having overruled the Monk's apprehensions, Matilda continued thus.

'The prediction and the Ghost are equally false; But it must be your care, Ambrosio, to verify the first. Antonia within three days must indeed be dead to the world; But She must live for you.

Her present illness, and this fancy which She has taken into her head, will colour a plan which I have long meditated, but which was impracticable without your procuring access to Antonia. She shall be yours, not for a single night, but for ever. All the vigilance of her Duenna shall not avail her: You shall riot unrestrained in the charms of your Mistress. This very day must the scheme be put in execution, for you have no time to lose.

The Nephew of the Duke of Medina Celi prepares to demand Antonia for his Bride: In a few days She will be removed to the Palace

of her Relation, the Marquis de las Cisternas, and there She will be secure from your attempts. Thus during your absence have I been informed by my Spies, who are ever employed in bringing me intelligence for your service. Now then listen to me. There is a juice extracted from certain herbs, known but to few, which brings on the Person who drinks it the exact image of Death. Let this be administered to Antonia: You may easily find means to pour a few drops into her medicine. The effect will be throwing her into strong convulsions for an hour: After which her blood will gradually cease to flow, and heart to beat; A mortal paleness will spread itself over her features, and She will appear a Corse to every eye. She has no Friends about her: You may charge yourself unsuspected with the superintendence of her funeral, and cause her to be buried in the Vaults of St. Clare. Their solitude and easy access render these Caverns favourable to your designs. Give Antonia the soporific draught this Evening: Eight and forty hours after She has drank it, Life will revive to her bosom. She will then be absolutely in your power: She will find all resistance unavailing, and necessity will compel her to receive you in her arms.'

'Antonia will be in my power!' exclaimed the Monk; 'Matilda, you transport me! At length then, happiness will be mine, and that

happiness will be Matilda's gift, will be the gift of friendship!

I shall clasp Antonia in my arms, far from every prying eye, from every tormenting Intruder! I shall sigh out my soul upon her bosom; Shall teach her young heart the first rudiments of pleasure, and revel uncontrouled in the endless variety of her charms! And shall this delight indeed be mine? Shall I give the reins to my desires, and gratify every wild tumultuous wish? Oh! Matilda, how can I express to you my gratitude?'

'By profiting by my counsels. Ambrosio, I live but to serve you:

Your interest and happiness are equally mine. Be your person Antonia's, but to your friendship and your heart I still assert my claim. Contributing to yours forms now my only pleasure. Should my exertions procure the gratification of your wishes, I shall consider my trouble to be amply repaid. But let us lose no time. The liquor of which I spoke is only to be found in St. Clare's Laboratory. Hasten then to the Prioress; Request of her admission to the Laboratory, and it will not be denied. There is a Closet at the lower end of the great Room, filled with liquids of different colours and qualities. The Bottle in question stands by itself upon the third shelf on the left. It contains a

greenish liquor: Fill a small phial with it when you are unobserved, and Antonia is your own.'

The Monk hesitated not to adopt this infamous plan. His desires, but too violent before, had acquired fresh vigour from the sight of Antonia. As He sat by her bedside, accident had discovered to him some of those charms which till then had been concealed from him: He found them even more perfect, than his ardent imagination had pictured them. Sometimes her white and polished arm was displayed in arranging the pillow: Sometimes a sudden movement discovered part of her swelling bosom: But wherever the new-found charm presented itself, there rested the Friar's gloting eyes. Scarcely could He master himself sufficiently to conceal his desires from Antonia and her vigilant Duenna. Inflamed by the remembrance of these beauties, He entered into Matilda's scheme without hesitation.

No sooner were Matins over than He bent his course towards the Convent of St. Clare: His arrival threw the whole Sisterhood into the utmost amazement. The Prioress was sensible of the honour done her Convent by his paying it his first visit, and strove to express her gratitude by every possible attention. He was paraded through the Garden, shown all the reliques of Saints

and Martyrs, and treated with as much respect and distinction as had He been the Pope himself. On his part, Ambrosio received the Domina's civilities very graciously, and strove to remove her surprize at his having broken through his resolution. He stated, that among his penitents, illness prevented many from quitting their Houses. These were exactly the People who most needed his advice and the comforts of Religion: Many representations had been made to him upon this account, and though highly repugnant to his own wishes, He had found it absolutely necessary for the service of heaven to change his determination, and quit his beloved retirement. The Prioress applauded his zeal in his profession and his charity towards Mankind: She declared that Madrid was happy in possessing a Man so perfect and irreproachable. In such discourse, the Friar at length reached the Laboratory. He found the Closet: The Bottle stood in the place which Matilda had described, and the Monk seized an opportunity to fill his phial unobserved with the soporific liquor. Then having partaken of a Collation in the Refectory, He retired from the Convent pleased with the success of his visit, and leaving the Nuns delighted by the honour conferred upon them.

He waited till Evening before He took the road to Antonia's dwelling. Jacintha welcomed him with transport, and besought him

not to forget his promise to pass the night in the haunted Chamber: That promise He now repeated. He found Antonia tolerably well, but still harping upon the Ghost's prediction. Flora moved not from her Lady's Bed, and by symptoms yet stronger than on the former night testified her dislike to the Abbot's presence. Still Ambrosio affected not to observe them. The Physician arrived, while He was conversing with Antonia. It was dark already; Lights were called for, and Flora was compelled to descend for them herself. However, as She left a third Person in the room, and expected to be absent but a few minutes, She believed that She risked nothing in quitting her post. No sooner had She left the room, than Ambrosio moved towards the Table, on which stood Antonia's medicine: It was placed in a recess of the window. The Physician seated in an armed-chair, and employed in questioning his Patient, paid no attention to the proceedings of the Monk. Ambrosio seized the opportunity: He drew out the fatal Phial, and let a few drops fall into the medicine. He then hastily left the Table, and returned to the seat which He had quitted. When Flora made her appearance with lights, every thing seemed to be exactly as She had left it.

The Physician declared that Antonia might quit her chamber the next day with perfect safety. He recommended her following the

same prescription which, on the night before, had procured her a refreshing sleep: Flora replied that the draught stood ready upon the Table: He advised the Patient to take it without delay, and then retired. Flora poured the medicine into a Cup and presented it to her Mistress. At that moment Ambrosio's courage failed him. Might not Matilda have deceived him? Might not Jealousy have persuaded her to destroy her Rival, and substitute poison in the room of an opiate? This idea appeared so reasonable that He was on the point of preventing her from swallowing the medicine. His resolution was adopted too late: The Cup was already emptied, and Antonia restored it into Flora's hands. No remedy was now to be found: Ambrosio could only expect the moment impatiently, destined to decide upon Antonia's life or death, upon his own happiness or despair.

Dreading to create suspicion by his stay, or betray himself by his mind's agitation, He took leave of his Victim, and withdrew from the room. Antonia parted from him with less cordiality than on the former night. Flora had represented to her Mistress that to admit his visits was to disobey her Mother's orders: She described to her his emotion on entering the room, and the fire which sparkled in his eyes while He gazed upon her. This had escaped Antonia's observation, but not her Attendant's; Who

explaining the Monk's designs and their probable consequences in terms much clearer than Elvira's, though not quite so delicate, had succeeded in alarming her young Lady, and persuading her to treat him more distantly than She had done hitherto. The idea of obeying her Mother's will at once determined Antonia. Though She grieved at losing his society, She conquered herself sufficiently to receive the Monk with some degree of reserve and coldness. She thanked him with respect and gratitude for his former visits, but did not invite his repeating them in future. It now was not the Friar's interest to solicit admission to her presence, and He took leave of her as if not designing to return. Fully persuaded that the acquaintance which She dreaded was now at an end, Flora was so much worked upon by his easy compliance that She began to doubt the justice of her suspicions. As She lighted him down Stairs, She thanked him for having endeavoured to root out from Antonia's mind her superstitious terrors of the Spectre's prediction: She added, that as He seemed interested in Donna Antonia's welfare, should any change take place in her situation, She would be careful to let him know it. The Monk in replying took pains to raise his voice, hoping that Jacintha would hear it. In this He succeeded; As He reached the foot of the Stairs with his Conductress, the Landlady failed not to make her appearance.

'Why surely you are not going away, reverend Father?' cried She;
'Did you not promise to pass the night in the haunted Chamber?
Christ Jesus! I shall be left alone with the Ghost, and a fine
pickle I shall be in by morning! Do all I could, say all I
could, that obstinate old Brute, Simon Gonzalez, refused to marry
me today; And before tomorrow comes, I suppose, I shall be torn
to pieces, by the Ghosts, and Goblins, and Devils, and what not!
For God's sake, your Holiness, do not leave me in such a woeful
condition! On my bended knees I beseech you to keep your
promise: Watch this night in the haunted chamber; Lay the
Apparition in the Red Sea, and Jacintha remembers you in her
prayers to the last day of her existence!'

This request Ambrosio expected and desired; Yet He affected to
raise objections, and to seem unwilling to keep his word. He
told Jacintha that the Ghost existed nowhere but in her own
brain, and that her insisting upon his staying all night in the
House was ridiculous and useless. Jacintha was obstinate: She
was not to be convinced, and pressed him so urgently not to leave
her a prey to the Devil, that at length He granted her request.
All this show of resistance imposed not upon Flora, who was
naturally of a suspicious temper. She suspected the Monk to be

acting a part very contrary to his own inclinations, and that He wished for no better than to remain where He was. She even went so far as to believe that Jacintha was in his interest; and the poor old Woman was immediately set down, as no better than a Procuress. While She applauded herself for having penetrated into this plot against her Lady's honour, She resolved in secret to render it fruitless.

'So then,' said She to the Abbot with a look half-satirical and half indignant; 'So then you mean to stay here tonight? Do so, in God's name! Nobody will prevent you. Sit up to watch for the Ghost's arrival: I shall sit up too, and the Lord grant that I may see nothing worse than a Ghost! I quit not Donna Antonia's Bedside during this blessed night: Let me see any one dare to enter the room, and be He mortal or immortal, be He Ghost, Devil, or Man, I warrant his repenting that ever He crossed the threshold!'

This hint was sufficiently strong, and Ambrosio understood its meaning. But instead of showing that He perceived her suspicions; He replied mildly that He approved the Duenna's precautions, and advised her to persevere in her intention.

This, She assured him faithfully that He might depend upon her

doing. Jacintha then conducted him into the chamber where the Ghost had appeared, and Flora returned to her Lady's.

Jacintha opened the door of the haunted room with a trembling hand: She ventured to peep in; But the wealth of India would not have tempted her to cross the threshold. She gave the Taper to the Monk, wished him well through the adventure, and hastened to be gone. Ambrosio entered. He bolted the door, placed the light upon the Table, and seated himself in the Chair which on the former night had sustained Antonia. In spite of Matilda's assurances that the Spectre was a mere creation of fancy, his mind was impressed with a certain mysterious horror. He in vain endeavoured to shake it off. The silence of the night, the story of the Apparition, the chamber wainscotted with dark oak pannells, the recollection which it brought with it of the murdered Elvira, and his incertitude respecting the nature of the drops given by him to Antonia, made him feel uneasy at his present situation. But He thought much less of the Spectre, than of the poison. Should He have destroyed the only object which rendered life dear to him; Should the Ghost's prediction prove true; Should Antonia in three days be no more, and He the wretched cause of her death The supposition was too horrible to dwell upon. He drove away these dreadful images, and

as often they presented themselves again before him. Matilda had assured him that the effects of the Opiate would be speedy. He listened with fear, yet with eagerness, expecting to hear some disturbance in the adjoining chamber. All was still silent. He concluded that the drops had not begun to operate. Great was the stake, for which He now played: A moment would suffice to decide upon his misery or happiness. Matilda had taught him the means of ascertaining that life was not extinct for ever: Upon this assay depended all his hopes. With every instant his impatience redoubled; His terrors grew more lively, his anxiety more awake. Unable to bear this state of incertitude, He endeavoured to divert it by substituting the thoughts of Others to his own. The Books, as was before mentioned, were ranged upon shelves near the Table: This stood exactly opposite to the Bed, which was placed in an Alcove near the Closet door. Ambrosio took down a Volume, and seated himself by the Table: But his attention wandered from the Pages before him. Antonia's image and that of the murdered Elvira persisted to force themselves before his imagination. Still He continued to read, though his eyes ran over the characters without his mind being conscious of their import. Such was his occupation, when He fancied that He heard a footstep. He turned his head, but nobody was to be seen.

He resumed his Book; But in a few minutes after the same sound was repeated, and followed by a rustling noise close behind him. He now started from his seat, and looking round him, perceived the Closet door standing half-unclosed. On his first entering the room He had tried to open it, but found it bolted on the inside.

'How is this?' said He to himself; 'How comes this door unfastened?'

He advanced towards it: He pushed it open, and looked into the closet: No one was there. While He stood irresolute, He thought that He distinguished a groaning in the adjacent chamber: It was Antonia's, and He supposed that the drops began to take effect: But upon listening more attentively, He found the noise to be caused by Jacintha, who had fallen asleep by the Lady's Bedside, and was snoring most lustily. Ambrosio drew back, and returned to the other room, musing upon the sudden opening of the Closet door, for which He strove in vain to account.

He paced the chamber up and down in silence. At length He stopped, and the Bed attracted his attention. The curtain of the

Recess was but half-drawn. He sighed involuntarily.

'That Bed,' said He in a low voice, 'That Bed was Elvira's!
There has She past many a quiet night, for She was good and
innocent. How sound must have been her sleep! And yet now She
sleeps sounder! Does She indeed sleep? Oh! God grant that She
may! What if She rose from her Grave at this sad and silent
hour? What if She broke the bonds of the Tomb, and glided
angrily before my blasted eyes? Oh! I never could support the
sight! Again to see her form distorted by dying agonies, her
blood-swollen veins, her livid countenance, her eyes bursting
from their sockets with pain! To hear her speak of future
punishment, menace me with Heaven's vengeance, tax me with the
crimes I have committed, with those I am going to commit
. Great God! What is that?'

As He uttered these words, his eyes which were fixed upon the
Bed, saw the curtain shaken gently backwards and forwards. The
Apparition was recalled to his mind, and He almost fancied that
He beheld Elvira's visionary form reclining upon the Bed. A few
moments consideration sufficed to reassure him.

'It was only the wind,' said He, recovering himself.

Again He paced the chamber; But an involuntary movement of awe and inquietude constantly led his eye towards the Alcove. He drew near it with irresolution. He paused before He ascended the few steps which led to it. He put out his hand thrice to remove the curtain, and as often drew it back.

'Absurd terrors!' He cried at length, ashamed of his own weakness----

Hastily he mounted the steps; When a Figure drest in white started from the Alcove, and gliding by him, made with precipitation towards the Closet. Madness and despair now supplied the Monk with that courage, of which He had till then been destitute. He flew down the steps, pursued the Apparition, and attempted to grasp it.

'Ghost, or Devil, I hold you!' He exclaimed, and seized the Spectre by the arm.

'Oh! Christ Jesus!' cried a shrill voice; 'Holy Father, how you gripe me! I protest that I meant no harm!'

This address, as well as the arm which He held, convinced the Abbot that the supposed Ghost was substantial flesh and blood. He drew the Intruder towards the Table, and holding up the light, discovered the features of Madona Flora!

Incensed at having been betrayed by this trifling cause into fears so ridiculous, He asked her sternly, what business had brought her to that chamber. Flora, ashamed at being found out, and terrified at the severity of Ambrosio's looks, fell upon her knees, and promised to make a full confession.

'I protest, reverend Father,' said She, 'that I am quite grieved at having disturbed you: Nothing was further from my intention. I meant to get out of the room as quietly as I got in; and had you been ignorant that I watched you, you know, it would have been the same thing as if I had not watched you at all. To be sure, I did very wrong in being a Spy upon you, that I cannot deny; But Lord! your Reverence, how can a poor weak Woman resist curiosity? Mine was so strong to know what you were doing, that I could not but try to get a little peep, without any body knowing any thing about it. So with that I left old Dame Jacintha sitting by my Lady's Bed, and I ventured to steal into the Closet. Being unwilling to interrupt you, I contented myself

at first with putting my eye to the Keyhole; But as I could see nothing by this means, I undrew the bolt, and while your back was turned to the Alcove, I whipt me in softly and silently. Here I lay snug behind the curtain, till your Reverence found me out, and seized me ere I had time to regain the Closet door. This is the whole truth, I assure you, Holy Father, and I beg your pardon a thousand times for my impertinence.'

During this speech the Abbot had time to recollect himself: He was satisfied with reading the penitent Spy a lecture upon the dangers of curiosity, and the meanness of the action in which She had been just discovered. Flora declared herself fully persuaded that She had done wrong; She promised never to be guilty of the same fault again, and was retiring very humble and contrite to Antonia's chamber, when the Closet door was suddenly thrown open, and in rushed Jacintha pale and out of breath.

'Oh! Father! Father!' She cried in a voice almost choaked with terror; 'What shall I do! What shall I do! Here is a fine piece of work! Nothing but misfortunes! Nothing but dead people, and dying people! Oh! I shall go distracted! I shall go distracted!'

'Speak! Speak!' cried Flora and the Monk at the same time; 'What has happened? What is the matter?'

'Oh! I shall have another Corse in my House! Some Witch has certainly cast a spell upon it, upon me, and upon all about me! Poor Donna Antonia! There She lies in just such convulsions, as killed her Mother! The Ghost told her true! I am sure, the Ghost has told her true!'

Flora ran, or rather flew to her Lady's chamber: Ambrosio followed her, his bosom trembling with hope and apprehension. They found Antonia as Jacintha had described, torn by racking convulsions from which they in vain endeavoured to relieve her. The Monk dispatched Jacintha to the Abbey in all haste, and commissioned her to bring Father Pablos back with her, without losing a moment.

'I will go for him,' replied Jacintha, 'and tell him to come hither; But as to bringing him myself, I shall do no such thing. I am sure that the House is bewitched, and burn me if ever I set foot in it again.'

With this resolution She set out for the Monastery, and delivered

to Father Pablos the Abbot's orders. She then betook herself to the House of old Simon Gonzalez, whom She resolved never to quit, till She had made him her Husband, and his dwelling her own.

Father Pablos had no sooner beheld Antonia, than He pronounced her incurable. The convulsions continued for an hour: During that time her agonies were much milder than those which her groans created in the Abbot's heart. Her every pang seemed a dagger in his bosom, and He cursed himself a thousand times for having adopted so barbarous a project. The hour being expired, by degrees the Fits became less frequent, and Antonia less agitated. She felt that her dissolution was approaching, and that nothing could save her.

'Worthy Ambrosio,' She said in a feeble voice, while She pressed his hand to her lips; 'I am now at liberty to express, how grateful is my heart for your attention and kindness. I am upon the bed of death; Yet an hour, and I shall be no more. I may therefore acknowledge without restraint, that to relinquish your society was very painful to me: But such was the will of a Parent, and I dared not disobey. I die without repugnance: There are few, who will lament my leaving them; There are few, whom I lament to leave. Among those few, I lament for none more

than for yourself; But we shall meet again, Ambrosio! We shall one day meet in heaven: There shall our friendship be renewed, and my Mother shall view it with pleasure!

She paused. The Abbot shuddered when She mentioned Elvira: Antonia imputed his emotion to pity and concern for her.

'You are grieved for me, Father,' She continued; 'Ah! sigh not for my loss. I have no crimes to repent, at least none of which I am conscious, and I restore my soul without fear to him from whom I received it. I have but few requests to make: Yet let me hope that what few I have shall be granted. Let a solemn Mass be said for my soul's repose, and another for that of my beloved Mother. Not that I doubt her resting in her Grave: I am now convinced that my reason wandered, and the falsehood of the Ghost's prediction is sufficient to prove my error. But every one has some failing: My Mother may have had hers, though I knew them not: I therefore wish a Mass to be celebrated for her repose, and the expence may be defrayed by the little wealth of which I am possessed. Whatever may then remain, I bequeath to my Aunt Leonella. When I am dead, let the Marquis de las Cisternas know that his Brother's unhappy family can no longer importune him. But disappointment makes me unjust: They tell me that He

is ill, and perhaps had it been in his power, He wished to have protected me. Tell him then, Father, only that I am dead, and that if He had any faults to me, I forgave him from my heart. This done, I have nothing more to ask for, than your prayers: Promise to remember my requests, and I shall resign my life without a pang or sorrow.'

Ambrosio engaged to comply with her desires, and proceeded to give her absolution. Every moment announced the approach of Antonia's fate: Her sight failed; Her heart beat sluggishly; Her fingers stiffened, and grew cold, and at two in the morning She expired without a groan. As soon as the breath had forsaken her body, Father Pablos retired, sincerely affected at the melancholy scene. On her part, Flora gave way to the most unbridled sorrow.

Far different concerns employed Ambrosio: He sought for the pulse whose throbbing, so Matilda had assured him, would prove Antonia's death but temporal. He found it; He pressed it; It palpitated beneath his hand, and his heart was filled with ecstasy. However, He carefully concealed his satisfaction at the success of his plan. He assumed a melancholy air, and addressing himself to Flora, warned her against abandoning herself to fruitless sorrow. Her tears were too sincere to permit her

listening to his counsels, and She continued to weep unceasingly.

The Friar withdrew, first promising to give orders himself about the Funeral, which, out of consideration for Jacintha as He pretended, should take place with all expedition. Plunged in grief for the loss of her beloved Mistress, Flora scarcely attended to what He said. Ambrosio hastened to command the Burial. He obtained permission from the Prioress, that the Corse should be deposited in St. Clare's Sepulchre: and on the Friday Morning, every proper and needful ceremony being performed, Antonia's body was committed to the Tomb.

On the same day Leonella arrived at Madrid, intending to present her young Husband to Elvira. Various circumstances had obliged her to defer her journey from Tuesday to Friday, and She had no opportunity of making this alteration in her plans known to her Sister. As her heart was truly affectionate, and as She had ever entertained a sincere regard for Elvira and her Daughter, her surprize at hearing of their sudden and melancholy fate was fully equalled by her sorrow and disappointment. Ambrosio sent to inform her of Antonia's bequest: At her solication, He promised, as soon as Elvira's trifling debts were discharged, to transmit to her the remainder. This being settled, no other business

detained Leonella in Madrid, and She returned to Cordova with all diligence.